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Senate

(Legislative day of Friday, September 22, 2000)

The Senate met at 2:02 p.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, these days in the Senate are filled with crucial issues, differences on solutions, and vital votes on legislation. We begin this day with a question that You asked King Solomon, "Ask. What shall I give you?" We empathize with Solomon's answer. He asked for an "understanding heart." We are moved with the more precise Hebrew translation of an "understanding heart," meaning a "hearing heart."

Solomon wanted to hear a word from You for the perplexities that he faced. He longed for the gift of wisdom so that he could have answers and directions for his people. We are inspired by Your response: "See, I have given you a wise and listening heart."

I pray for nothing less as You answer this urgent prayer for the women and men of this Senate. Help them to listen to Your guidance and grant them wisdom for their debates and decisions. All through our history as a nation You have made good men and women great when they humbled themselves, confessed their need for Your wisdom, and listened intently to You. Speak Lord;

we need to hear Your voice in the cacophony of other voices. We are listening. You are our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable GEORGE VOINOVICH, a Senator from the State of Ohio, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4 p.m. with Senators DURBIN and THOMAS in control of the time. Following morning business, the Senate is expected to consider the VA-HUD appropriations bill. It is hoped that legislation can be completed in short order and without a rollcall vote. However, if a rollcall vote is requested, the vote will occur tomorrow at a time to be determined.

On Wednesday, there will be up to 7 hours of debate on the conference report to accompany the sex trafficking victims bill. Senator THOMPSON will

make a point of order against the report, and a vote is expected relative to appealing the ruling of the Chair. Senators can also expect a vote on the adoption of the sex trafficking conference report. The Senate may also begin consideration of the Agriculture appropriations conference report during tomorrow's session.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). Under the previous order, the time of the leaders is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now be in a period of morning business for 2 hours.

CONGRESSMAN BRUCE VENTO

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was just informed by the Sergeant at Arms that BRUCE VENTO, a Member of the House of Representatives, died today, just a short time ago.

I served in the House with BRUCE. After I left the House, I saw him virtually every day; he and I worked out in the House gym every morning. He

NOTICE

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• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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was very faithful. We had a very warm relationship.

When I served in the House, I can remember one of the first conversations we had was about a national park in Nevada. I had never contemplated a national park in Nevada. We did not have one. I, frankly, did not know the history of Nevada as it related to the area around Mt. Wheeler. I did not realize that Key Pittman, a longtime Senator from Nevada, had sent President Reagan's Director of the Park Service, William Penn Mott, there when he was a park ranger in the 1930s to find a site in Nevada for a national park, and this is the spot that he found and gave this information to President Roosevelt.

Over the years, many political battles ensued and the park never came into being. I did some wilderness legislation for Nevada. It was extremely controversial. But based on my conversations with BRUCE VENTO, I decided to peel off some of what we were doing in wilderness and go for a national park. It was one of the best things I ever did; we now have a national park in Nevada, Great Basin National Park, which is really a world wonder. It has a mountain peak over 13,000 feet high; it has Nevada's only glacier; it has the oldest living thing in the world, the bristlecone pine—over 5,000 years old. They were there before Christ came to Earth; they were there during the time the pyramids were built. In addition, Lehman Caves is located inside the park boundary.

Without talking more about the park itself, just the inception of that idea came to me as a result of a conversation I had with BRUCE VENTO as a new Member of the House of Representatives. He was very interested in things related to the environment.

BRUCE VENTO being dead now is hard to contemplate because he worked so hard on his physical body. A few years ago, while here at his home in Washington, he fell off the roof while doing some work and was broken up very badly. But it only kept him from his gym work for a short period of time, even though he had broken bones.

BRUCE VENTO died as a result of asbestosis which he contracted as a young man while working with asbestos. Out of nowhere he developed a lung problem. Last year he had a lung removed. They were hoping that they got it. They didn't. And a few weeks ago it was announced they did not. I am sure his family and those close to him knew that his life was not going to be long, but I didn't know.

I am really saddened at the death of BRUCE VENTO. He is somebody who I will always remember. I will always remember him for his smile and his love for the environment and, on a personal basis, for what he did to quicken my mind about the possibility of having a national park in Nevada.

Our country is less today than it was yesterday as a result of the passing of BRUCE VENTO. I expressed to his family the great affection that I and many

Members, those who work with me in the Congress, have for BRUCE. I wish them, no I don't wish them—I give them the knowledge that the passage of time will lessen the anguish they now feel. Hopefully, as the months pass by, only memories of their love and loss will be in their minds, and not the fact of their loss; the fact of the many things he contributed to this country will be paramount in their minds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I heard the remarks of our colleague from Nevada about our good friend, BRUCE VENTO. I also express my deepest sympathies to his family at their loss. It is a loss to them and it is a loss to America. BRUCE VENTO was a man who educated many of us, including myself, as to the great value of our national parks; that in many ways they are the repositories of America's dream, of what kind of a country we were and what kind of an America we wish to leave for future generations.

I had the opportunity to talk to Congressman VENTO just a few weeks ago on behalf of a national park that I feel very deeply about, Everglades National Park. As always, he was extremely solicitous of information and forthcoming in his willingness to be of assistance.

I am saddened today at the news of BRUCE VENTO's passing. America, and particularly our great natural treasures, have lost a tremendous friend and articulate advocate on their behalf.

THE BUDGETING PROCESS

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I come this afternoon to the floor for two reasons. The first is to express my general dismay at the status of the budgeting process for this year. Second is to give a specific example of how this process has resulted in a program—which was clearly outlined and approved by Congress and signed into law by the President as the Equity Transportation Act for the 21st Century, generally referred to as TEA-21—has been convoluted.

Let me first talk about the general budgeting process for this year. We are now 10 days into the new fiscal year, and substantial parts of our budget have yet to be enacted and sent to the President for his consideration. Even more dismaying than that is what is in the budgets that we have passed and sent to the President. I use, as example, No. 1, the most recent budget this Senate has acted upon when, last Friday, we passed the Transportation appropriations conference committee report.

First, the process. I was very interested in this bill, as will become apparent as I move to point No. 2 of my remarks. Yet it was not available until Friday morning, the same morning that we were called to vote upon this very complex bill which will allocate some \$58 billion of our National Treasury. Even today, specific details are

yet to be discerned. So we are operating as alleged pilots of the national fiscal trust through dark clouds and fog and driving rain, unaware of where we are or where we have gone.

I am also very concerned about the specific numbers in this legislation. I know this has been an issue of great concern to our Presiding Officer, who has, in his period in the Senate, distinguished himself as one who is very concerned about our fiscal discipline.

For the fiscal year 2000, which ended September 30, we had a Transportation appropriations amount of \$50.7 billion. That is what we spent over the preceding 12 months. We have been operating under a budget resolution which, because of its own complexities, is difficult to align precisely with one of the specific appropriations bills, but we have had a general philosophy that the appropriations for fiscal year 2001 should not grow at a rate greater than the rate of inflation. According to the Consumer Price Index for the period July 1999 to July 2000, the rate of inflation for the United States was 3.5 percent.

If you add 3.5 percent to last year's Transportation appropriations, you would add, in rounded numbers, \$1.775 billion for a total of \$52.475 billion. That would have been the goal, the destination, the ceiling for spending under this Transportation account using the principle that the budget should be restrained to the rate of inflation.

The administration submitted a budget for this account that was \$54.6 billion. The Senate passed a Transportation bill which was \$54.8 billion.

But when the bill came back from the conference committee with the House, the total amount of the bill that we voted on favorably last Friday was \$58 billion, a 14-percent growth over the expenditure on the same account for the previous fiscal year. That is a staggering increase, and it is an increase which puts at risk many of the things upon which the political campaigns of the fall of 2000 have focused their attention: How are we going to spend the non-Social Security surplus? How will we utilize the \$2.2 trillion that is projected to come into the National Treasury over the next 10 years? I underscore that the \$2.2 trillion is on the assumption that we will hold spending for this 10-year period to the rate of inflation. That rate was 3½ percent. Yet in this one budget we have spent 14 percent.

If this budget were to be the standard by which we operated—this budget represents about 8 percent of the total discretionary spending of the United States. If we exceed every budget by the same amount that we have done with this one budget of Transportation, we will diminish that non-Social Security surplus in the range of 35 to 40 percent. This is serious business because we are making representations to the American people that we are going to protect that surplus; that we are going to use it either for targeted tax cuts, to